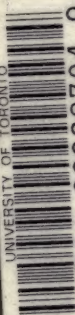


POEMS
OF MEN AND HOURS

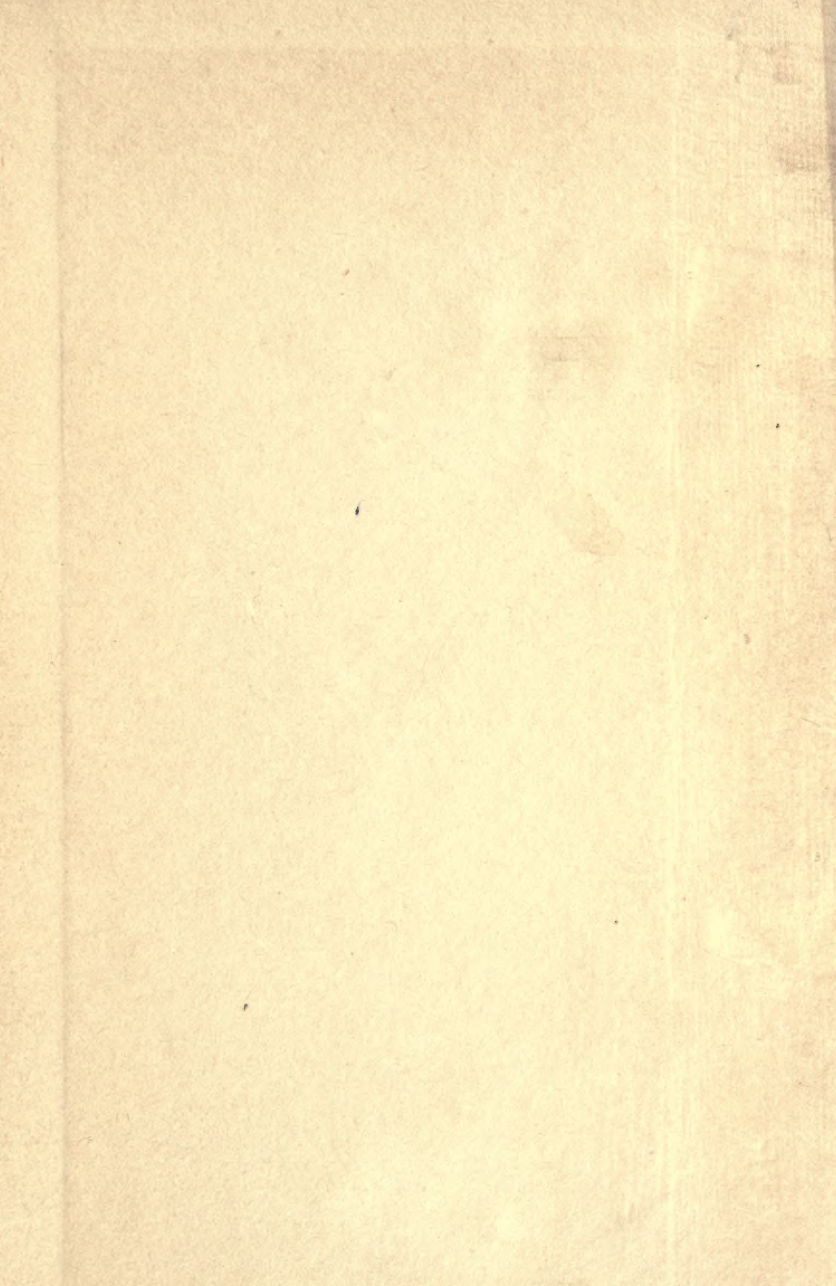
BY
JOHN DRINKWATER

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POEMS OF MEN AND HOURS

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POEMS OF MEN AND HOURS

BY

JOHN DRINKWATER

AUTHOR OF 'THE DEATH OF LEANDER AND OTHER POEMS'

'LYRICAL AND OTHER POEMS' ETC.

LONDON

DAVID NUTT, 57-59 LONG ACRE

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A Prayer has been set by Rutland Boughton for unaccompanied chorus; and *May* as a song by Edward Prosser.

MY SONGS

TO R. C. LEHMANN

*From the meadows, quiet cities, open places,
I gathered in these songs that I have made,
From memory of men who set their faces
Towards the sunset, pale yet unafraid.*

*From the stars on windy nights, from lyric laughter
Of rivers swollen with the fruitful rain,
From love to-day and love to bloom hereafter,
From hopes foredone and kindled yet again.*

*If they should flourish for a little season
And fall on death—I cannot tell. I know
That they are blameless of that deepest treason
Whereby the crown of song is stricken low.*

*They are no hearsay echoes. Somewhat seeing—
I sang my vision, knowing—what I knew ;
Their spirit is my spirit, and their being
Out of the fibre of my being grew.*

*If we who sing are careless of derision,
And pay with measured hate unmeasured wrongs,
To men whose love has somewhat shaped our vision
We bring what love we may ; to you my songs.*

MY SONGS

TO R. C. LEHMAN

From the windows, quiet, open places,
I gathered in these songs that I have made,
From memory of men who sat their faces
To mark the sunset, pale yet unafraid.
From the days of living nights, from the laughter
Of rivers swollen with the joyful rain,
From love to-day and love to bloom to-morrow,
From hopes forgotten and kindled yet again.
If they should hover for a little season
And fall on death—I cannot tell, I know
That they are bladders of that deepest treason
Whereby the crown of song is stricken low.
They are no literary rebels, somewhat saying—
I sang my vision, knowing—what I know?
Their spirit is my spirit, and their being
Out of the fire of my being grows.
If we who sing are careless of division,
And boy with measured beat measured songs,
To men whose love has somewhat shaped our vision
We bring what love we may: to you my songs.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
My Songs (<i>Dedication</i>)	v
OF LIFE—	
A PRAYER	i
THE HARPER OF THE WORLD'S BEAUTY	3
ASCENT	4
EXPECTANCY	5
THE LADY LAURA	7
THE SOLDIER	11
LOVE'S PERSONALITY	12
AFTERMATH	13
FOR THEY HAVE NEED	14
REDEMPTION	16
SECRECY	17
CHILD CECILY	18
DEATH	20
LOVE	21
THE GOD AUTHORITY	22
OF TIME AND PLACE—	
A HARVEST THANKSGIVING	23
JANUARY DUSK	26
AFTER RAIN	27
THE MIRACLE	28
MAY	29
LATE SUMMER	30
THE DOWNS	31
IN THE WOODS	32

	PAGE
AT ROTTINGDEAN	33
THE BROKEN GATE	34
OXFORD	35
FROM LONDON	39
LONDON AT NIGHT	40
AT WATERLOO	42
A PICTURE	43
OF MEN—	
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE	44
GEORGE MEREDITH	45
TO WILLIAM WATSON	46
THE LOOM OF THE POETS.	48
KING EDWARD DEAD	50
THE DEAD CRITIC	52
THE KNIGHT	53

A PRAYER

Lord, not for light in darkness do we pray,
Not that the veil be lifted from our eyes,
Nor that the slow ascension of our day
Be otherwise.

Not for a clearer vision of the things
Whereof the fashioning shall make us great,
Not for remission of the peril and stings
Of time and fate.

Not for a fuller knowledge of the end
Whereto we travel, bruised yet unafraid,
Nor that the little healing that we lend
Shall be repaid.

Not these, O Lord. We would not break the bars
Thy wisdom sets about us ; we shall climb
Unfettered to the secrets of the stars
In Thy good time.

We do not crave the high perception swift
When to refrain were well, and when fulfil,
Nor yet the understanding strong to sift
The good from ill.

Not these, O Lord. For these Thou hast revealed,
We know the golden season when to reap
The heavy-fruited treasure of the field,
The hour to sleep.

Not these. We know the hemlock from the rose,
The pure from stained, the noble from the base,
The tranquil holy light of truth that glows
On Pity's face.

We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees,
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

Knowledge we ask not—knowledge Thou hast
lent,
But, Lord, the will—there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.

THE HARPER OF THE WORLD'S BEAUTY

I touch my strings
To melodies rare ;
Whether God looks after things
I know not, neither care ;
I never think of the black pit,
Or if I do, I laugh at it.

My notes are borne
Through infinite space,—
Are your limbs all bruised and torn ?
And in a losing race ?
I take no heed of all your pain—
My fingers of the harp are fain.

Though all men be
Full stricken in grief,
What are little men to me ? —
Their days and woes are brief ;—
But I for ever touch my strings,
Remote from perishable things.

ASCENT

For that of your great charity you lead
My vagrant spirit into quiet ways,
And pity me, and look upon my need,
Shall I but bring unprofitable praise ?

My strings are tuned not to so high a theme,
I have no music but would do you wrong,
I can but hope to lend some troubled dream
The simple consolation of a song,

And soothe your little griefs and little cares ;
Your sacred sorrows deep not mine to know,
I may not climb with you the golden stairs
Of love,—I am content to have it so.

Yet I shall follow, humble, unafraid,
No longer troubled, heedless of my scars,
Until at length I find my footsteps stayed
Upon the very threshold of the stars.

EXPECTANCY

I know the night is heavy with her stars,—
 So much I know,—
I know the sun will lead the night away,
 And lay his golden bars
Over the fields and mountains and great seas,
I know that he will usher in the day
 With litanies
Of birds and young dawn-winds. So much I
 know,—
 So little though.

I know that I am lost in a great waste,
 A trackless world
Of stars and golden days, where shadows go
 In mute and secret haste,
Paying no heed to supplicating cries
Of spirits lost and troubled,—this I know.
 The regal skies
Utter no word, nor wind, nor changing sea,—
 It frightens me.

Yet I believe that somewhere, soon or late,
 A peace will fall
Upon the angry reaches of my mind ;
 A peace initiate

In some heroic hour when I behold
A friend's long-quested triumph, or unbind
 The tressèd gold
From a child's laughing face. I still believe,—
 So much believe.

Or, when the reapers leave the swathèd grain,
 I'll look beyond
The yellowing hazels in the twilight-tide,
 Beyond the flowing plain,
And see blue mountains piled against a sky
Flung out in coloured ceremonial pride ;
 Then haply I
Shall be no longer troubled, but shall know,—
 It may be so.

THE LADY LAURA

'Twas dusk, and time in adoration bent
Kissed the ripe summer, and the lilac scent
Bestowed upon the breathless eventide
A fragrance that stole out and sanctified
The brown and purple shadowy close of day.
Like little ghosts that moved from spray to spray
The hedgerow creatures gathered them to rest,
And immemorial quiet the world possessed.

Beside the fretted fringes of a wood
The dwelling of the Lady Laura stood,
The Lady Laura whom, old legends say,
All wayworn men in sorrowful array
Sought out that she might heal their weariness,
For she was beautiful, and great to bless
With cheering word their lonely journeying,
Yea, unto stricken hearts her smile could bring
A comfort that they never yet had known:
Her pity was a holy benison.

Upon that dusky purple eve one came
Whose youth had withered. In the world his name
Was held in no esteem, for he had wrought
No good to men, nor had he fashioned aught

Of beauty or compassion in his days,
No deep desire had touched his lips to praise,
Nor even had he lent his arm to reap
Thin ears of knowledge for his fellows ; sleep
Had held dominion ever in his heart :
From love and love's consoling set apart,
He had no treasure for his soul's repose
As now he drew towards death, and he arose
And sought the Lady Laura on that eve
Of lilac scent, for he would fain believe
That she might haply arm him of her grace
To meet the hour that closed on him apace.

He waited in the shadow of tall trees
That girt her dwelling, and the tranced ease
Of all that evening slipt into his being,
As though the Lord of Sorrows were decreeing
That even utter wretchedness should fear
Its own despair no more when she was near.

Across the silent meadows copper-barred
With cuckoo-flowers and golden love-cups starred,
The Lady Laura came. She looked as one
Whose face had been upturned to the sun
In all his seasons ; ripe her beauty glowed
Amid the colour and passioning that flowed
Through the flushed evening, and the crown of
peace
Was on that beauty, lending it increase

Of marvellous splendour, rapt magnificence.
'Twas not the calm that cloistered innocence
Wears on its brow ere yet the subtle years
Have made assault: her soul had known its fears,
Her heart its pangs; her stainless quietude
Was pledge of knowledge of the ills that brood
Over the world, yea, she had been annealed
In tasting all, whereby alone are healed
The bruised lips of hope.

No word he spake,
Nor moved he, lest in moving he might break
The present bliss that she, not knowing, gave
His weary heart. No word, he knew, could save
His paling dreams so surely as the boon
Of having seen her beauty's plenilune.
He watched her pass, and went his way elate,
Knowing no dread, unterrified by fate
Whate'er its secret will. And, as he went,
He reckoned his account. 'Though I have spent
Not well the single talent that was mine,
Though I have garnered naught of oil and wine,
Though I can say to no man, "In thy need
My hand was strong to cherish thee and lead."
Though I have dreamed, yet dreaming touched
no string
Of melody to ease men's travailing,
Though I have scattered nothing in my ways
But dust and withered leaves of ruined days,

Though I have set my kisses on the brow
Of perishable love, yet even now
These debts are paid, for He who gathers in
The tale of human peril and triumph and sin,
Against my deep transgression will array
The record of one fading summer day
When, bowed with new humility, and moved
Soul-deep by nature's sorcery, I loved
Purely and wholly for a brief hour's telling
Before death came, and how, strong love compelling,
I yet no guerdon craved, no single glance,
Nor of my love made any utterance—
He will remember of His charity :
I shall be saved, and she shall sainted be.'

THE SOLDIER

The large report of fame I lack,
And shining clasps and crimson scars,
For I have held my bivouac
Alone amid the untroubled stars.

My battlefield has known no dawn
Beclouded by a thousand spears ;
I've been no mounting tyrant's pawn
To buy his glory with my tears.

It never seemed a noble thing
Some little leagues of land to gain
From broken men, nor yet to fling
Abroad the thunderbolts of pain.

Yet I have felt the quickening breath
As peril heavy peril kissed—
My weapon was a little faith,
And fear was my antagonist.

Not a brief hour of cannonade,
But many days of bitter strife,
Till God of His great pity laid
Across my brow the leaves of life.

LOVE'S PERSONALITY

LOVE'S PERSONALITY

If I had never seen
Thy sweet grave face,
If I had never known
Thy pride as of a queen,
Yet would another's grace
Have led me to her throne.

I should have loved as well
Not loving thee,
My faith had been as strong
Wrought by another spell ;
Her love had grown to be
As thine for fire and song.

Yet is our love a thing
Alone, austere,
A new and sacred birth
That we alone could bring
Through flames of faith and fear
To pass upon the earth.

As one who makes a rhyme
Of his fierce thought
May have but little art,
Yet challenge change and time,
So is the love we wrought
Not greatest, but apart.

AFTERMATH

Lady, I brought my love to you,
And more than his love may no man bring ;
You used my love for a year or two,
And profited much of its minist'ring.
And then—ah ! well, 'twas nothing strange,
Folk said, for women chafe and change.

And therein folk divined not well ;
You never changed ; for from the first
Your weakling spirit could not tell
The man before you, soul athirst,
From those who sipped and went and came,
And, like you, held it but a game.

I gave my all ; it should have brought
Some treasure for the hidden years ;
You took it, and in payment wrought
Not just a little day of tears,—
I loved too well,—I may forget,
Some later life,—not yet, not yet.

My soul was strong and yours was weak,
Yet mine is broken, yours unscarred ;
You still your hopes aloud may speak,
But mine are secret locked and barred ;
While all my griefs as ghosts go by,
And out of the darkness croon and cry.

FOR THEY HAVE NEED

*Pale ghosts along the city ways they move,
Most pitifully wounded by swift spears
Driven by hands that are no hands of love,
Asking no bounty of the stern slow years
Save that the long relentless pain may bless
Their weary spirits with forgetfulness—
Pale ghosts along the city ways they move.*

*They have no home where any laughter is,
With patient hands they sow, yet unto them
No harvest season comes, no sudden bliss
Of garnered fruits ; their brows no diadem
Of high achievement presses. From their eyes
Faded long since the fires of proud emprise,
They have no home where any laughter is.*

*We drave them forth unto the desert places,
Drift of the world, unbidden to the feast,
The token of our scorn upon their faces,
They hunger long yet are they not appeased ;
To us the shame—to us anew to quicken
Those poor frail phantoms desolate and stricken,
We drave them forth unto the desert places.*

*They ask but little, let us give no less,
Grey lips of sorrow plead—the peril ours
If we disdain to clothe their nakedness,
Nor turn a moment from the shining flowers
Of peace, to look upon their bitter need,
O let us pause—grey lips of sorrow plead,
They ask but little, let us give no less.*

REDEMPTION

When hope had perished, and despair was dead,
And I no longer looked upon the day
With any passion, but with dull dismay—
Such was the torment I had suffered—
One holy saint, by love's compassion led,
Came to me and beheld my disarray,
And pitied it. There was no word to say ;
I owed my life ; words stood me in no stead.

Henceforth I can but serve in little things,
Giving my all to yield her some small bliss
For this great miracle she wrought for me ;
And I am charted for the eternal sea,
Within my soul her gracious comfortings,
Upon my lips the glory of her kiss.

SECRECY

✓ The world hath store of wisdom to divine
 The formal passage of our lives, and thence
 Deems that our holy passion, rapt, intense,
 Lies naked to its vision for a sign.
 Yet knows it naught of that rich love of mine
 Bestowed on thee in secret reverence,—
 The sacrificial proud magnificence
 Of thy repayment—these are mine and thine.

Ours only, set apart from cunning eyes,
 Cloistered communion sweet whereby we press
 Upon new revelation day by day.
 Great moods prophetic, sacred ministries
 That crown the quiet sessions, yet confess
 No being to the clamorous array.

CHILD CECILY

Ever she stands on fruitful summer eves,
Beside a pool I know ; the sweet air weaves
An ever-changing pattern on the leaves
Of fragile birch and spearèd willow-tree,
 Child Cecily, Child Cecily,
Remote from any strife is she,
 Child Cecily.

She never sees me, for her eyes are bent
For ever o'er those shadowy waters, blent
With western lights ; haply her lips have spent
Rich kisses on some face she fain would see,
 Child Cecily, Child Cecily,
Some face she yearns again to see,
 Child Cecily.

Haply beneath the folded lilies move
Wraiths of departed days of holy love,
Whereof they two a magic kingdom wove.
Surely no greater grief than this hath she,
 Child Cecily, Child Cecily,
A fierce belovèd memory,
 Child Cecily.

And she is calm, nor hath she any fear,
Her beauty is a peril very dear,
And she is wise and pitiful ; no tear
Earth sheds but stirs her gracious charity,
 Child Cecily, Child Cecily,
Yea, hands to bind and heal hath she,
 Child Cecily.

She knows me not—I would not have her know,
For then the spell would break, my dream would go
The way of dreams,—I would not have it so.
My love is rare, and known to none but me,
 Child Cecily, Child Cecily,
'Twould perish if 'twere known to thee,
 Child Cecily.

DEATH

The shadowy ways are deep
That girt the narrow path
Wherein man's feet are set,
Wherein alone is light,
The little light he hath
To lead him to the sleep
When he shall all forget,
Or all things see aright.

From out the shadowy ways
For ever comes the noise
Of Death's wings beating slow.
Man hears, and asks in vain
If Death at length destroys,
Or leads to golden days,
Or shall he ever know
Who husbandeth the grain.

The shadowy ways hold fast
The thing his heart would hold,
Foreknowledge of his fate.
The little light is weak
The secret to unfold ;
He cries, until at last
The shadows shall abate
Their mute disdain, and speak.

LOVE

Lord of the host of deep desires
That spare no sting, yet are to me
Sole echo of the silver choirs
Whose dwelling is eternity.

With all save thee my soul is pressed
In high dispute from day to day,
But, Love, at thy most high behest
I make no answer, and obey.

THE GOD AUTHORITY

When the supreme Artificer first flung
These myriad lives upon the wilderness,
He stirred in each the purpose to confess
Before the world, with proud unbridled tongue,
His own desire and vision. Yet unsung
Are all the multitudinous hopes that press
About their hearts in withered loveliness :
Their wills are bent, their purpose is unstrung.

Herded along the heavy ways they go,
Of their high consecration unaware,
Mute, and bereft of passion's sanctity :
And they adventure nothing, nothing dare,
Poor ghosts of once great promise stricken low,
Abject before the God Authority.

A HARVEST THANKSGIVING

A jewelled pheasant through the stubble ran.
The dusk was golden 'twixt the golden moon
And golden stubble, and the work of man
No witness found save in the stubbled field,
That spake of rich and safely garnered yield,—
Full promise grown to full and gracious boon.

From down the little lane that wound away
Towards the drooping lashes of the day
Came up the sound of heavy waggon wheels,
Bearing the last fruits of the willing lands.
Long had they lain beneath the seasons' care—
God's yellow charters with their scarlet seals,
Charters of man's well-being, and of rare
Repayment for the labour of his hands,—
Long had they looked towards their tryst with man;
A jewelled pheasant through the stubble ran.

And then it seemed not well that we should go
Out of the golden hour, and silent place
Wherein the year had wrought so much of grace
For all men's good, without some tribute paid,
Some little thanks or benediction; so
Together in the dusk a song we made,—
(For surely something to the song he brings
Who cherishes the song the singer sings.)

*The earth and the Lord of the earth designed
A mighty thing for the sons of men,
And set their plan to the fostering wind
And the sun, that one might be as ten.
The wind and the sun and the rain conspired
And the dews and the changing nights and
days,
To fashion aright the thing desired,—
A wonder woven in secret ways.*

*The seed was spread in the furrowed earth,
And nurtured long in the gloom it lay,
Till the beckoning hours led on its birth
And drew it up to the laughing day.
The young spring soothed and cherished the
blade,
And summer 'stablished the stately stem,
And the Lord was glad of the thing He'd
made,
The fair green ears and the fruit of them.*

*Summer had worked her will, and past
With her world of green, and autumn arose
And over the prospering tillage cast
A glory of change; the marshalled rows
Of bearded barley and four-square wheat
And pale oats, bearing a hundredfold,
Ripened under her shapely feet,
And out of the green ear grew the gold.*

*God, how wonderful this the thing,
The new-old miracle Thou hast done,
This proud triumphant fashioning,
Through rains and wind and shine of the sun,
Of ripe and rich abundance, borne
To-day to the sheltering homes of men ;
For us Thy Spirit among the corn
Has moved, and one has grown as ten.*

The dusk had deepened, and a wreathèd mist
Closed upon the great clustered elms that kept
Their immemorial vigil, and the owls
Were calling through the shadows. Moonlight
 kissed
The branches where the jewelled pheasant slept

JANUARY DUSK

Austere and clad in sombre robes of grey,
With hands upfolded and with silent wings,
In unimpassioned mystery the day
Passes ; a lonely thrush its requiem sings.

The dust of night is tangled in the boughs
Of leafless lime and lilac, and the pine
Grows blacker, and the star upon the brows
Of sleep is set in heaven for a sign.

Earth's little weary peoples fall on peace
And dream of breaking buds and blossoming,
Of primrose airs, of days of large increase,
And all the coloured retinue of spring.

AFTER RAIN

Up from the south in a silver splendour,
Sweet of the earth of the coastland counties
Cloud and wind sweep on and render
Glory to God in their pageant of pride,
Breasting the hills as a strong man breasting
The heavy hills of the giver of bounties,
Filling the world with a sweet unresting
Song as the song of the sounding tide.

Gathered along the leafless valleys
Sleep the shadowed and gleaming waters,
Touched to life as the great white galleys
Of cloud pass over the willing sun ;
And the earth is good, and glad of her glory
Her passionate sons and laughing daughters,
As ever the children of fabled story
In the days when the mother and they were one.

THE MIRACLE

Come, sweetheart, listen, for I have a thing
Most wonderful to tell you—news of spring.

Albeit winter still is in the air,
And the earth troubled, and the branches bare,

Yet down the fields to-day I saw her pass—
The spring—her feet went shining through the
grass.

She touched the ragged hedgerows—I have seen
Her finger-prints, most delicately green ;

And she has whispered to the crocus leaves,
And to the garrulous sparrows in the eaves.

Swiftly she passed and shyly, and her fair
Young face was hidden in her cloudy hair.

She would not stay, her season is not yet,
But she has reawakened, and has set

The sap of all the world astir, and rent
Once more the shadows of our discontent.

Triumphant news—a miracle I sing—
The everlasting miracle of spring.

MAY

Love brought me life in the glory of May—

The sun shone white on the wind-white beans,
But love brought death ere the close of the day—

The red moon rose o'er the leafy screens,
For love both giveth and taketh away.

Her lips pressed mine and our hearts were light—

The cowslip blooms hung heavy and sweet,
Brown hands were laid on hands that were
white—

The cherry-blossoms fell at our feet,
Ah! fruitful the day, but barren the night.

Through the day the delight of love repaid—

The bees clung close on the apple-trees,
At night remembrance of love betrayed—

One bird's song broke the silences,
Love killeth fear and maketh afraid.

Mere chance—no more; brief boon of a day—

Oh, cherry blossoms, oh, wind-white beans,
Then peace no more for many a May:

The harvest's up and no man gleans,
For love both giveth and taketh away.

LATE SUMMER

Though summer long delayeth
Her blue and golden boon,
Yet now at length she stayeth
Her wings above the noon;
She sets the waters dreaming
To murmurous leafy tones,
The weeded waters gleaming
Above the stepping-stones.

Where fern and ivied willow
Lean o'er the seaward brook,
I read a volume mellow—
A poet's fairy-book;
The seaward brook is narrow,
The hazel spans its pride,
And like a painted arrow
The king-bird keeps the tide.

Fair day of consolation
For days of broken trust,
Fair haunt of re-creation
From ways of drifting dust;
No word of all the toiling,
No word of all the wrong,—
For this so sweet assoiling
A brief thanksgiving song.

THE DOWNS

The brown lands, the pleasant down-lands,
Where the clean winds whistle and sting,
And we laugh and praise the Maker of Days
And life is a wonderful thing :
Brave downs that sweep from the sea to the sky,
That know nor change nor fret,
Where a man may gather a measure of peace
And a measure of tears forget.

The brown lands, the pleasant down-lands,
Set bare to the season's chime,
Remote, austere, where neither fear
Assaults, nor space nor time ;
Eternal watchers of the years,
Mute acolytes of God,
We come sore stricken from dusty ways
Wherein our fathers trod.

Oh, brown lands, oh, pleasant down-lands,
The generations fling
The zeal of our hearts to the men-made marts,
Where life is a pitiful thing ;
We come to you in humble wise,
Deal kindly with our quest,
Calm hills, inscrutable yet mild,
To weariness bring rest.

IN THE WOODS

IN THE WOODS

I was in the woods to-day,
And the leaves were spinning there,
Rich apparelled in decay,—
In decay more wholly fair
Than in life they ever were.

Gold and rich barbaric red
Freakt with pale and sapless vein,
Spinning, spinning, spun and sped
With a little sob of pain
Back to harbouring earth again.

Long in homely green they shone
Through the summer rains and sun,
Now their humbleness is gone,
Now their little season run,
Pomp and pageantry begun.

Sweet was life and buoyant breath,
Lovely too ; but for a day
Issues from the house of death
Yet more beautiful array :
Hark, a whisper—' Come away.'

One by one they spin and fall,
But they fall in regal pride :
Dying, do they hear a call
Rising from an ebbless tide,
And, hearing, are beatified ?

AT ROTTINGDEAN

(To A. N.)

The days are sweet at Rottingdean,
And very sweet at Rottingdean,
Where leagues of downland travel north, and
southward leagues of sea,
A sea that flashes blue and green
With purple shadows thrown between,
And downs that gather up the songs of all the
winds that be.

Lad, do you remember when
You led me far away from men
Up the scented hills to show me where the wild
thyme grew,
And how you made them live again—
The dreamers and the fighting men
Who built an England long ago of laughing hearts
and true?

We bared our brows against the sun,
And sent our rhymes along the dun
And grey and golden changing downs, and through
the summer air :
We heard the coloured waters run,
We challenged sorrow's spears—and won,
And just a bit of heaven fell about us then and
there.

THE BROKEN GATE

I know a little broken gate
Beneath the apple-boughs and pines,
The seasons lend it coloured state,
And round its hinge the ivy twines—
The ivy and the bloomless rose,
And autumn berries flaming red ;
The pine its gracious scent bestows,
The apple-boughs their treasure shed.

It opens on an orchard hung
With heavy-laden boughs that spill
Their brown and yellow fruit among
The withered stems of daffodil :
The river from its shallows freed
Here falls upon a stirless peace,
The tides of time suspended lead
The tirèd spirit to release.

A little land of mellowed ease
I find beyond my broken gate,
I hear amid the laden trees
A magic song, and there elate
I pass along from sound and sight
Of men who fret the world away,—
I gather rich and rare delight
Where every day is holy day.

OXFORD

I

Far down the ghostly ages we look with friendly
eyes

To the grave and gracious dreamers who
fashioned thee in dreams,
Saw thy domes and lordly turrets interwoven
with the skies,
And the pleasant silent places of thy lily-
haunted streams.

' Here shall rise,' they said, ' a city very comely,
very still,
Whose gentleness is wiser than the wisdom of
her mouth,
And she shall be love-worthy, and of high be-
nignant will,
And her sons shall bear her blessing to the
north wind and the south.'

And the years looked on their moulding, and
mellowed it, and crowned
Thy stately habitations with a peace that
ever grows,
And thy grey and crumbling walls, with golden
meadows set around,
Are populous with shadows up-gathered in repose.

And now thy fame is sweeter, and thy bounty
farther borne
Than those brave large-hearted dreamers will
ever wake to know ;
Immortal is the hey-day of that far-off rosy morn,
And thy beauty is a token of their dreams
of long ago.

II

Along thy lichen-crustèd ways,
Musing passed, in older days,
Poets who have won the world
With songs of prophecy and praise.

He, the virgin knight and strong,
He who spake no word of wrong,
Knew thee in the days ere yet
Stella touched his lips to song.

He of noble tameless pride,
Whose desire unsatisfied
On the shores of Italy
Broke in melody and died.

One that to thy classic flame
Bowed in loving worship came,—
In thy clear serenity
Found his undivided aim.

He whose challenge echoes still,
 He who wrought with Titan will
 In the labouring world of men
 Beauty's kingdom to fulfil.

Latest he whose passion spent
 On a whole world's wonderment
 Flashes of diviner song
 Than bereavèd stars lament.

III

Long have we laboured in the great cities, where
 all things lovely
 Sicken and cease ;
 Daughter of dreaming, lady of learning, mother
 of wisdom,
 Lend us thy peace.

IV

The idols that we worship are mute, and we
 have grown
 Too careless of the treasure of a quiet kingly
 mind,
 And our purpose bears no harvest in its season,
 but is blown
 As the thistledown in autumn on an ever-
 changing wind.

And it makes for some consoling to remember,
in the days

When the limbs and heart are troubled by
the dust of dead desires,

Thy mild majestic silence, and the peace that
ever stays

About thy leafy channels and the shadows of
thy spires ;

To remember that thy shaping was the fruit of
slow design

Long cherished by great builders who counted
not the years :

To remember for our ruling the message that is
thine—

‘ Who sows in haste and cunning shall reap
in haste and tears.’

FROM LONDON

God of the cherry-bloom in the orchards of calm,
Of sunlight on the little chestnut-leaves,
Of ghost-winged bees round the tassels of the
palm,

Be near me in this place. My spirit grieves.

I shall return unto Thy kingdom soon,
There is one waits my coming, and her brows
Are gravely turned upon Thy heaped and
fragrant boon

Of daffodils and twisted budding boughs.

The scent of the ploughlands is calling me away,
The chatter of the rooks, the open skies,
And she I know is waiting with the glory of the
day

And the shadow of the night in her eyes.

LONDON AT NIGHT

Mother of cities, queen of the world of the west,
Out of the meadows of bountiful blossom
I come,
Out of the choir of the voices of pitiful rest,
Into the pride of thy tumult where pity is
dumb.

On thy river a tremor of lights that flicker, and
cease
Where rises the tower of the house of the
makers of law,
And the shadow of night that covers the meadows
with peace,
But covers thy terrible beauty with infinite
awe.

I stare at the gleam of thy streets, and the rattle
of bells
Bewilders my sense and my turbulent wisdom
controls ;
The blinds are drawn down upon heavens that
crumble to hells,
And love is derided by lust in the market of
souls.

My passion is stilled, no vision nor thought
can I shape,

And my stifled desires beat out to this jingle
of rhyme—

I see thee, O mother of cities, a monster agape
For the waifs of the world, the rebels of
custom and time.

AT WATERLOO

Great peace is over Hougomont,
And over La Haie Sainte is peace,
The level lands are ploughed and rich
With promise of increase ;
The sleepy cattle graze along
Beneath the scarred historic walls,
And here where nations spent their blood
The flush of sunset falls.

No pride nor pity touches me
Nor hatred's fire and ancient stings,
Only a sense of strifes outworn,
And strange ironic things :
And stirrings of some broken strain
Of sounding hoofs and answering guns,
And faith that Europe now as then
Can breed heroic sons.

No word of moral yes or no
Be spoken as we see again
The tragic shaping of the world,
The carnival of pain ;
A blossomed calm is on the ways
Where desolation set her throne,
And life has gathered in from death
A glory not her own.

A PICTURE

Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
 No other light save the unclouded stars,
 Their clusters broken by the scented downs
 Massed up above us in the southern sky.
 Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
 Sending their little light along the board
 Laid out beneath a honeysuckle hedge
 In the cool dusk, with hospitable fare.
 Blue folds clear-cut along the table's rim,
 Until they meet the delicate blue robe
 Of one who sends soft laughter through the hush,
 Her face the haunt of clear repose and swift
 Ripples of humour, gracious, mellowing.

.

We shall remember in the barren days
 Blue folds and raiment, little oaken lights,
 The moth stars flitting through the ghostly dusk,
 Fair brow and slender throat and kindly speech,
 A hermitage of leaves and shadows, set
 In the deep hollow of the Sussex hills.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Died April 10, 1909

Now is no season for weeping,
For our poet has gone to the land
Where the toiler attaineth to reaping
The fruit of the toil of his hand,
This—or a quiet sleeping.

Master of melody, peace !
Albeit thy vespers are spoken,
Our worship and love shall increase.
Majestic, bejewelled, unbroken,
The tide of thy song shall not cease.

An end shall be made of our grieving,
Yet never an end of thy sway,
Thou weaver of music whose weaving
Shall pale not nor fall on decay.
Hush ! No word of bereaving.

GEORGE MEREDITH

Died May 18, 1909

The blossoms break from the bowers of the
leaves—

His dust is blown to the dust of his peers;
The swallows brood in the quiet eaves,

His spirit soars on the crest of the years:
He clomb the steep and lonely way,
He laughs from the peak of the gods to-day.

Summer bends to our long desire,

With bounty of bloom and blessing of song;
We take her gifts of meadow and quire,

But our lips are mute to the thanks that throng
From the heart for these. Her gifts are great
Beyond all thanks but the soul elate.

He laboured long and his labour grew

As a deathless boon to the sons of men,
Till, his toil achieved, his Maker drew

His clear soul up to Himself again:
Our hearts are full, but our lips are mute,
Our heads are bowed, but we gather the fruit.

The young year's promise ripens apace—

His dust is blown to the dust of his peers,
But his spirit laughs from its lofty place,

Where it rides on the crest of the winged years:
To us the summer of briefest gain,
To him the summer that knoweth no wane.

TO WILLIAM WATSON

For August 11, 1909

Majestic maker of majestic song,
Jealous that nothing mean should own thee sire,
Nor that thy lips should utter aught of wrong,
Nor any base desire
Be builded in the building of thy song.

The world has store of sacrificial tears
For each and all her children, but we wrest
Some strays of comfort from the niggard years,
Some little seasons blest
When poets weave their dreaming through
our tears.

And for that they their office do aright
Of holy consolation, let us bow
In sweet thanksgiving to our lords of light
Most blessed, even as thou
Art blest who many songs hast wrought aright.

Thanksgiving, and upon this crown of days,
This perfect hour, with little speech we bring
Tribute of love to mingle with our praise—
Prayers for the fashioning,
About thy hearth, of brave exultant days.

We come who much have gathered of thy singing ;
 Freely thou gavest, and to-day is given
Most rich repayment—love and beauty, bringing
 New surety of heaven,
And yet more chastened splendour to thy singing.

Master, I press about the lower ways
 Of that fair sunlit summit of thy reign ;
Will my voice reach thee ? will so searèd bays
 Be worthy ? Wilt thou deign
To take my little gift upon thy ways ?

THE LOOM OF THE POETS

To Thomas Hardy

I

They who are sceptred of the poets' race
Their high dominion bear by this alone—
That they report the world as they have known
The world, nor seek with slavish hands to trace
Poor profitable smiles upon the face
Of truth when smiles are none, nor fear to own
The bitterness of beauty overthrown,
But hold in hate the gilded lie's disgrace.

And such art thou, O singer of the gloom
Where-through in travail thou hast slowly won :
Albeit thy song is heavy with the doom
Of men whose little strivings are foredone,
Yet is it woven on the living loom
Of thine own suffering beneath the sun.

II.

And herein lies great solace. Who shall say
If thine austere and lonely utterance
Be closer knit to truth than theirs who dance
With happy hearts along the laughing way ?

Or matters it? We know that thou as they
Tell'st of the truth as thou hast seen it glance
Across the shadowed tracks of fate and
chance,
At best a fitful promise of the day.

Great patience must be ours ere we may know
The secrets held by labyrinthine time;
The ways are rough, the journeying is slow,
The perils deep,—till we have conquered these
And break at length upon the golden clime
He serves us best who sings but as he sees.

KING EDWARD DEAD

May 1910

Amid the blossoms of our English May,
He whom we loved who love our England well,
Goes out in silence to the shadowy way ;
And they shall write, who have the tales to tell
Of passionate princes whose adventures swell
The story of imperishable things,
High words of him as of proud ancient kings.

For he was of his people, and he set
Their love above the splendour of a throne ;
In him the sweetest strains of England met,
She cherished him and gave him of her own
Most sacred fire and strength and vision, grown
Through peril of the patient years to be
A glory for the children of the sea.

Our fame has suffered wrong. Where beauty
wanes
We look upon her waning leaden-eyed,
Our traffic is bereft of joy, the gains
Of labour are more treasured than the pride
Of labour rightly done, our wills are tied
By men who yet are slaves, and we have spent
Not well the courage of our discontent.

Yet have we still a greatness, and in him
Our name was sounded through the ways of men
With a sweet wholesome music, and the dim
Uncharted ages shall take up again
The storied honour of an England when
One bore her crown who took the world and
writ
His country's love across the brows of it.

Grave counsellor, sure pilot through the seas
Of dark unrest, kind father of us all,
Meek minister of peace, we mourn for these,
Death's hostages, not grieving that the call
Of death came gently to him, as the fall
Of whispers in the twilight-tide from lips
Scarce audible beneath the day's eclipse.

He passes in the blossoming of May,
Our English king, our loved, our English friend :
Not courtier-like nor fearfully we lay
Our simple tributes with him, and we bend
Our heads, and then, as little children, spend
Our last bewildered passion where he lies,
Then look to God with wistful wondering eyes.

THE DEAD CRITIC

Not of the high heroic line was he
Who wrought the world's deep music, but he
knew

The spring pellucid whence rapt poets drew
Brave draughts of Hippocrene ; he held in fee
The songs that woke to immortality,
Trembling from other lips. His loving grew
From loving unto prophecy ; he threw
Untruth from out the fields of poesy.

Yea, though he sang not, he was unto song
A light, a benediction. His desire
Was but to serve his heroes, and we reap
The fruit of his humility. Among
Their names shall his be spoken, and their quire
Shall let him fall upon no barren sleep.

THE KNIGHT

To Sir Ernest Shackleton, C.V.O.

They made him a knight as the knights of old
Who sailed away into unknown seas,
Seeking a treasure of storied gold
And spices and Spanish argosies:
Knights who adventured and took no thought,
But obeyed the spirit that in them wrought.

No grudging toil, nor a silver boon
Repaid to them from whom it was wrung,
Won him his spurs, but a soul of June—
A soul by the world's deep beauty stung
To a large unquestioning desire—
A soul whipped on by the wander-fire.

Out of the ways where the peoples weave,
Out of the seas where the great ships go,
From men who men of their own bereave,
He passed, for the call would have it so—
The call of the secret forces hurled
South of the world, south of the world.

Magical quest of a mystic dream,
Knowledge and beauty unrevealed,
Quest of the shifting golden gleam,
Quest of the lips in silence sealed,
And the eager hope that these might be
Loosened, and speak triumphantly—

Such were the proofs of the knights of old,
And he is a knight of the high descent ;
With theirs shall the song of the years enfold
The tale of his passion's discontent,
As theirs his name shall gather and grace
The homage of men of the island race.

THE END

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